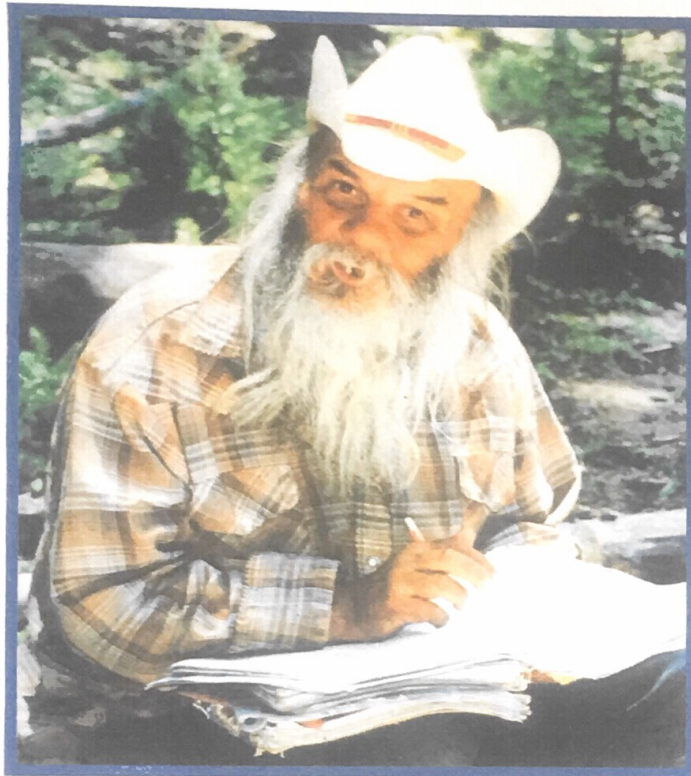




Rainbow Family

Life Stories



*by Jodey Bateman.
Interviews with Rainbow
Family of Living Light
folks conducted between
1977 and 2008.*

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THE CHRIST FAMILY
- Jodey's introduction

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The Christ Family

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The Christ Family is an order of counter-culture monks and nuns, preaching to all who will hear the three keys to heaven - "No killing, no sex and no materialism."

No killing means vegetarianism as far as non-use of milk products or honey and non-use of leather. No sex meant when I first met the Christ Family in 1976 that all physical contact - even shaking hands - was forbidden except for emergencies like helping someone who is injured. The Christ Family is one of three counter-culture spiritual groups I know of who wear robes because they believe that pants attract too much attention to the genital area. No materialism means no personal possessions other than the white robe, an Army blanket worn as a poncho or flung over the shoulder (the Christ Family are often known as "blanket brothers"), a T-shirt wrapped around the head (called a "helmet"), a sleeping bag and a tote sack of cloth with such small personal items as tooth brushes, combs, pipes and tobacco. Christ Family members usually go barefoot.

The Christ Family was founded by Lightning Amen, who they believe is Jesus Christ returned to earth, in 1969. Several well known Christ Family members are believed to be reincarnations of Biblical characters. Christ Family members often come to Rainbow gatherings and work hard in any kitchen they are sure has no meat in it.

When I was first working on this book in 1978 and '79, it was impossible to find a Christ Family member who would give a life story. All they wanted to do was tell their beliefs and they got angry if pressed for details about their personal lives. So the only life stories I could get were from two former members, Star Bearor and Clay.

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In 1983 I was able to interview St. Stephen, an ardent active member of the Christ Family. He explained that the hostility of Christ Family members to questioning in earlier years was because in those days, they had to go through much greater hardships, including frequent arrests, which made them often hostile to anyone who wasn't interested in joining.

The Christ Family seems to be going through what social scientists who study religion call "institutionalization". Instead of simply giving away their possessions when they join, new converts turn over all the money to the Family, and it is used to rent land in California and Florida for the members to winter on and to keep up a fleet of vans and buses. Originally hymn-singing was forbidden in the Christ Family, but now the Family has produced two albums of its own hymns. Some requirements like robe-wearing are often violated. Christ Family members seem more secure and relaxed around non-members.

The great majority of Christ Family members are white males, apparently of working class background, but there is a woman called Mother Mary, who is nearly as important as Lightning Anne. Although these figures and other old-time members called "archangels" are treated with great respect there is no tight control over the membership. It would be difficult to do so anyway, since most Christ Family members are constantly on the road. At least one Christ Family member has been de-programmed by Ted Patrick, but overall, the atmosphere of the Family seems much looser than any of what are usually called "cults".